Juno Steel and the Case of the Magpies
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Peter Nureyev, Juno Steel, Rita (Penumbra Podcast), Buddy Aurinko, Cecil Kanagawa, Cassandra Kanagawa, Min Kanagawa, Croesus Kanagawa, Jet Sikuliaq

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Alternate Universe - Victorian, Alternate Universe - Magic, Non-Graphic Violence, Suicide Attempt, Compulsion, Implied/Referenced Character Death, Implied/Referenced Suicide, Down with the aristos!, Biting, Dom/sub, Pining, Explicit Sexual Content, Magic Juno Makes Even Worse Decisions, attempted self-harm, Flirting, Stephen and Juno are 'prideful idiot kin', Peter is Lucien but ten years older and with a friend so I couldn't resist this au, Based on a KJ Charles novel, First few chapters are a lot so heed the warnings, Angst, Fluff, Juno and his moral core...hmm sexey, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, No Homophobia, No Racism

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Juno Steel and the Case of the Magpies

by the_archivist_is_a_problem_child

Summary

Good evening dear travellers and welcome to the Penumbra. I must say, you couldn't have come at a more...interesting time. You see, when you attract guests from everywhere and every when, the stories they tell may take different shapes...but that does not mean that our guests will too. The Penumbra's guests have lived many stories across many universes and many planets… and none more so than a private detective named Juno Steel and a master thief named Peter Nureyev. As experienced Travellers, you know of their current story. The story of a radioactive city, a murderous mask, a death threat, a lie... and a kiss.

But this is not that story...well, not completely at least. Set nearly a thousand years in the past, Peter Nureyev thought he was one of the easier cons he's ever been on. Pose as the heir apparent to the Crane earldom, search the Piper Mansion for the Magpie ring and vanish into thin air. No tools or break-in required. But after his latest nightmare tells him to kill himself, Peter realises the Mansion has a shroud of evil surrounding it- and it has set its sights on him now.

Come traveller, come into Room N-19 for the story of Juno Steel and the Case of the Magpie Lord

Notes

ELLO EVERYONE.
GOOD GOD THIS IS GOING TO BE A SLOW ONE.

So this is a long labor of love for Jupeter and The Magpie Lord series by KJ Charles which has my favourite Chaotic Neutral Smuggler Lucien Crane and the principled badass Stephen Day who gave me such Jupeter flashbacks oh my God.

Since I literally finished this today, I'll be uploading the chapters every two weeks gradually so yall think I can you know write competently.

Please note that this initially will have some heavy themes and

violence.

Thank you to the artists who put up with my procrastinating ass and did such an amazing job of the art! Please look at it here- Link to legend-of-zegend's art!- https://legend-ofzegend.tumblr.com/post/619659654131269632/and-last-but-certainly-not-least-my-final-piece

Juno Steel

See the end of the work for more notes

One for Sorrow

It has been raining all day and all night. Hard on the head and on the body, the torrent of icy cold water hurt you like pinpricks if you were part of the unlucky many who were caught outside or forced to stay outside on the wet streets of London.

It's also what saved Peter Nureyev.

The nauseating vileness of the fog, born of his own miserable shameful life chokes every breath from his lungs. Thin oily wisps of shame and hatred crawled into his ear, whispering recriminations and salvation with the same high-pitched whisper. The sharp crunch of bone-crushing across the road, the soothing red of blood trickling, gushing across the stones as his heartbeat stutters towards the blessed darkness of the end. Like the drip-drip of the raindrops as they fall on his-

Peter vaguely registers his legs slipping on the wet shingles, just before his fingers grip the drip's edge and plunge into the cold pool of collected rainwater. Peter gasps like a drowning man breaking the surface as the permeating fog in his mind parts, snapping him back to reality. He wastes no time thinking beyond reaching the windowsill right below him and lets go of his grip, catching the sill with a precise aim. He nearly sobs with relief as he sees the unlocked window is banging in the wind and raises himself into the bedroom.

Peter lies on the dusty carpeted floor, his breath as hoarse as the relief pounding away in his heart. The window sways gently in the cold wind as he looks up at the chandelier on the ceiling. Too old-fashioned for an earldom. Hasn't been touched in years, much like most things in this godforsaken mansion, the dust almost as thick as the-

Peter closed his eyes. He doesn't know if what could make the fog come back, all he knows is the vile oiliness as it chokes him from the inside, the voices that whisper about the crunch of bone, the flow of blood, the sharp edge of the knife- No. Not again.

Peter breathes in, and out again about three times as the cold biting pain in his fingers from the rainwater that saved his life fades away slightly. He raises himself upright and half stumbles to a tray of whiskey and glasses that the valet had placed in his bedroom- right before he gave his notice. He welcomed the hot burn in his throat and

sat on a red chair, dusting away the cobwebs and dust from it, of course.

Three weeks. Three weeks since the lawyer had uneasily dropped the keys to the mansion in his hand and walked away- or ran, in all honesty. A natural reaction to a house whose previous owner and the owner before him had killed himself, he had thought. Anyone would be cautious at the idea of the Crane Mansion, and the Cranes themselves he had reasoned. But the vile acts of the aristocracy were only his concern as long as it involved them hoarding stolen or snatched treasure. Which the Cranes had in plenty, all of the gems more precious and valuable than the next.

It was all too easy. Forged documents, stating ‘Fitzroy Crane’ as the next in line, a simple weaving spell that shifted his eyes to the magpie-like blue and black of the Cranes and the lawyers were all too happy to declare him as Lord Crane and sign over the house. Easy and flawlessly executed.

A flawless crime is such a dull enterprise, my dear boy.

The reedy, proud voice of a great thief resounds through his head at the same time, making his lips stretch into a bitter smile. Three weeks in and the ring was nowhere to be found, except in the portraits of the Crane ancestors, a staff-less mansion who could not retain any maids or valets beyond two days, leaving Peter with no source of valuable information in a house bent on killing him via his own hand.

Definitely not dull now.

Maybe he is finally going insane. Peter played with the thought for two seconds, before discarding it away. Peter looked around, trying to find something, anything, when his eyes finally rested on the portrait above the bed. Hector Vaudrey, the last Lord Crane, dressed severely in a black and red waistcoat. His eyes looked grave but his mouth had a cruel twist to it, as if mocking the world for its inherent inferiority. Everything he’d already contemplated so many times both before and after he moved into this bedroom.

The artist who painted this portrait had clearly heard of the Cranes' reputation and didn’t seem to hide the aristocratic arrogance, superiority and casual cruelty that even a hired artist couldn’t remove from Hector’s visage it made Peter flinch from a portrait of a dead man. He’d even found out that the entire village around the Crane’s land practically had fireside chats where they commiserate with each

other over the latest cruelty, whether assault or early foreclosure by the bully who owned their lives and played with it like the last Lord Fortunegate before him-

Lord Fortunegate. Lord Fortunegate. For fuck's-

Peter stood up and leapt onto the bed to examine the portrait and the placard below it, ringing the bell once, twice, with a considerable amount of strength.

"Yes my lord?" The new valet came rushing in, still half-dressed in pyjamas.

"Saddle a horse now. I need to go into London".

Twelve For A Dastardly Curse

Chapter Summary

Magic is an intricate ritual...

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I am back with the second chapter of this behemoth of a fic which is longer than anything I've ever written in any fandom ever.
Please heed the tags. Tw magical imposed self-loathing attempted suicide (it never gets far enough but tags nonetheless)
(Also let it never be said I take very long in getting touching involved :-))

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Peter stared at the carriage clock in the hall as it ticked away slowly. He crumpled up the note from his pocket and smoothed it out again.

In a rare stroke of luck, Buddy Aurinko had answered his urgent summons within a day or so of him reaching London. She had been nearby in Kent ‘tying up old business’, most likely involving a sale of some long lost magical bauble and came through with a name that had been on the lips of her buyers recently, though by the way she described it, it sounded more like spat and ranted during transactions.

Juno Steel. Shaman or justiciar as Buddy had described him and his job. Some form of a magical policeman. That description would be a concerning fact, if Buddy hadn’t assured him repeatedly that he only investigated ‘magical crimes’. Even then, it did behoove Peter to brush up his knowledge on the Crane family and his identity a few more times. Why take the risk.

It won’t work. You’re going to die. You deserve it.

Peter reached for the tumbler of whiskey on the table and poured himself a drink, his hands shaking a little bit. Banish the thought, banish the fear.

Thief. Murderer.

Peter rose and started pacing the room, too on edge to sit and watch the clock anymore, the burn of the whiskey not melting away the taste of desperate hope. If it was just despair, he could have dealt with that. But that thread of hope. The hope of rescue. An outside party riding in to save him from a dark fate like a helpless supplicant, after years of training and mastering himself for self-reliance was particularly difficult to swallow.
But even the sour feeling of dependence was a better option than the vile fog of misery that could invade his thoughts at any time and render him insane, so he'd wait.

As the clock turned seven, he heard the valet go to open the door in the drawing room, deliberately not following. "Lord Crane is in the drawing room, if you will follow me…" He heard the valet murmuring as he ushered the justiciar in. Peter's heart sank a little bit at seeing a five foot scruffy, thin looking man enter the hall.

This was the sorcerer Buddy's buyers were afraid of? Scrawny to the point his worn brown coat was hanging off of him, Mr Steel cut a very nondescript figure for a moral crusader who irritated and intimidated criminals of the first water. With black curly hair cut ruthlessly short, his shoulders were hunched, as if trying to make himself as unnoticed as possible, even though any sane person on a second look would notice the sharpness of his eyes. Peter had seen those eyes in the face of hunters and assassins before. Focused intent, uncomfortably perceptive...trained? Did the justiciary recruit from the police force? Or did the police force lease out their magical users to them?

Christ, who did Buddy send?

"Mr Steel. I am Lord Fitzroy Crane." Peter put on a polite smile and extended his hand to the shaman? Sorcerer? In front of him.

"I know." Juno stared at him with dark, tawny eyes simmering with something approaching hate as he deliberately and insolently tucked his black-gloved hands in his pockets.

Peter noted his hostile glare and posture and sighed internally, his mind making the extremely short walk to an obvious conclusion.

"I take it you have...encountered some of my family before. My cousin Hector Vaudrey in particular" Peter said, his heart sinking even more. Christ was nothing going to go right with this job?

"His father too Lord Crane" Juno spat the title out like a curse. "I'm sure your family are rolling in their graves in the irony of me being

sent to help the likes of *you.*"

Peter wonders- not the first time if he should have just broken into this accursed place and just stolen the ring from wherever it was hidden instead of taking the 'easy' way out. Now he had a curse on his head that wants him to suffer before dying a painful death and the only person who can help him has as much reason to want it to finish the fucking job.

"Mr. Steel, I take it, if I offer an apology on behalf of my family, you will throw it back in my face and walk out of here, hmmm?" Peter said. "If that is true, please consider me told and yourself invited to get out."

Juno's upper lip curled in a sneer "Unfortunately, I do not have that luxury. Your friend Ms Aurinko was quite convinced of the danger to your life and had requested a favour on your behalf. But listen here-" Juno stomped belligerently forward and poked his finger into his chest. "I would not be here if I had any choice-"

Peter opened his mouth to reply but only a horrible sucking breath came out of his throat. His eyes felt blurry, unfocused as that accursed voice started whispering, summoning that fog, thick and all-consuming but somehow slimy and oily now.

Liar.

Filth.

Stained with blood and bone and gristle.

Worthless and nothing.

Traitorous bastard. Die.

Peter pushed the obstacle away as he stumbled blindly towards the kitchen. He vaguely registered the distant scuffling of feet behind him and shouting as the sweet searing pain the knife promised, called for him like a siren's bloody song. He had reached the end of the room and was a few inches from the door to blessed oblivion when a force dropped him to the ground, his knees going down from under him and his face planting into the carpet. He tried to raise himself up, only managing to scramble to his knees but two arms locked his chest from behind and stopped him from moving. Peter started to struggle, but when a bare hand touched his forehead, he arched in shock as if lightning passed through him.

It was like ten thousand sharp little pins and needles were stabbing him through the skin. Reaching into his skin, stabbing and popping and burning through the fog. The voice screamed through his throat, until it was raw and aflame, demanding it stop, but the flow of current spread across his body from his forehead, burning it all down to cinders and ash. The voice got louder and louder-

Until it didn't.

Juno Steel slumped back onto the floor, letting go as Peter slumped and lay down onto his back, his hand on his face.

"Someone really- Someone really really wants you dead. Six feet under the ground- shuffled off your mortal coil, cold and lifeless as a doorknob-dead." Juno panted out.

Peter didn't answer at first, so much so that Juno thought he had gone into shock. But when he uncovered his face, he saw a face-splitting, exhilarated grin of relief on his face.

"Yes, Mr Steel. For the last three weeks." Peter huffed out a dry hacking laugh as he raised himself to his feet and held out his hand for Juno.

Juno didn't take his hand but he raised himself and looked into his eyes with no contempt or dislike in it for the first time that day, "Firstly, I'm going to need a drink. Secondly, you're going to tell me everything. Start at the beginning, don't hide anything and you might just survive."

Chapter End Notes

Please kudos, comment, and share. I live off your validation like a praise Archivist.

Come scream at me in the comments or talk to me on @redqueenofevil (the one with the angry lesbian flag) on Twitter or on Tumblr jon-sims-is-a-problem-child where I mostly scream and shitpost about TMA and TPP now.

Next chapter will be up by 28th June.

End Notes

Please kudos, comment, and share. I live off your validation like a praise Archivist.

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Next chapter will be up by 14th June.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!